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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS PRELIMINARY RESULTS

REF: Ljubljana 662, Ljubljana 513

11. (U) On October 21, Slovenians voted to elect the new president of the republic a five year term. According to unofficial preliminary results, center-right candidate and frontrunner Lojze Peterle will face center-left candidate Danilo Tuerk in the second round on November 11. As of October 22, with all votes not yet counted, Peterle has managed to get 28 percent of the votes, enough to carry him into the second round. The competition for the second position is close - Tuerk with 24.55, and the other major center-left candidate, Mitja Gaspari, with 24.16 percent. The turnout was the lowest for presidential elections so far with 57 percent.

12. (U) The State Electoral Commission will announce official results of the first round by October 21, but it is clear that no candidate surpassed the 50 percent mark needed to win in a first round. The Commission still must count the votes that are coming from Slovene voters living abroad. The second round will occur on November 11. The new president has to take office by December 22, 2007.

13. COMMENT (SBU): Commentators were surprised that Peterle did not garner a greater percentage of the vote. The first round results should alert Peterle of the need to attract more of his voters to the polls in the second round. There are several reasons that Peterle might lose. Combined, the two center-left candidates attracted more votes than Peterle, and politicians expect that those who voted for Gaspari would vote for Tuerk in the second round, reflecting a victory of the left political orientation (in terms of Slovenian-specific politics) over the right. If the same voters come out in the second round, the left or center candidate Tuerk (most likely or Gaspari) will win. Secondly, on November 11, Slovenes will also vote on the legislative referendum on the Law on Transformation of Ownership of Insurance Companies. We expect many voters to come out to vote against the GoS proposed Law and those voters would also vote against Peterle since he is a member of the Government coalition party New Slovenia. Finally, the 20 percent of Slovenes who voted for the fourth place finisher, Member of Parliament Zmago Jelenc, are unlikely to play a role in final results because they are not expected to support any of the two that will go into the second round, nor are they likely to even appear at the polling stations. END COMMENT.

COLEMAN